



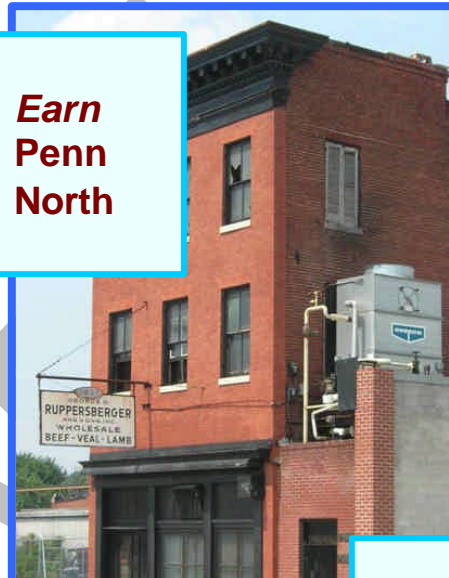
Martin O'Malley
Mayor

DRAFT Penn North Area Master Plan



**Live Penn
North**

**Earn
Penn
North**



**Play
Penn
North**



**Learn
Penn
North**



Otis Rolley, III
Director

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Baltimore Housing

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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING MISSION STATEMENT

To provide the highest level services and leadership in urban and strategic planning, historical, and architectural preservation, zoning, design, development, and capital budgeting to promote the sustained economic, social, and community development of the City of Baltimore

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1 THE PLAN FOR PENN NORTH

1.1 Overview of Area Master Planning

Continuing its commitment to put neighborhoods first, the Department of Planning prepares Area Master Plans (AMP) to approach neighborhood planning by focusing on physical redevelopment. The area master planning initiative concentrates primarily on the redevelopment of and reinvestment in areas where heavy public and private intervention is often necessary to address problematic issues such as high vacancy. There are several communities throughout the City with completed plans or plans underway, including Coldstream Homestead Montebello, Locust Point, Madison Square, Mount Vernon/ Charles North, Park Heights, Pen Lucy, Poppleton, Westport/ Cherry Hill, Reservoir Hill, Greater Rosemont and Coppin Heights, Sharp-Leadenhall, Uplands, and Woodberry.

In recent years, the City of Baltimore has experienced resurgence in community and economic development activity resulting from regional, statewide, and national economic growth and concentrated reinvestment in the City's Inner Harbor and downtown. However, this growth has only recently begun to extend into Baltimore's inner-city neighborhoods. Area Master Plans aim to develop community and economic growth strategies that encourage neighborhood reinvestment and directs that investment to positive ends.

1.2 The Neighborhood of Penn-North

Penn-North suffers from an identity crisis. The neighborhood is primarily residential, but interspersed with remnants of its industrial past. Warehouses, a slaughterhouse, truck parking lots, and automobile repair shops occupy lots next to residences. Retail services in and around the neighborhood consist primarily of small, converted storefronts that do not meet most of the shopping needs of nearby residents. And while Penn-North borders historic Druid Hill Park, the third oldest park in the United States, large warehouses and a ten-lane highway sever the neighborhood's connection to this tremendous asset. This hodgepodge of uses together with poor circulation within the neighborhood and poor access to assets in and near the neighborhood serves to make Penn-North a disjointed and unfriendly place for residents to live.

In summer 2004, the City of Baltimore Department of Planning and a committee of dedicated residents agreed to work together to develop a plan that addressed Penn-North's significant challenges and built upon its several assets. Prompted by a proposal by the State of Maryland and the City of Baltimore to relocate the State's Parole and Probation offices to Penn-North—a proposal residents soundly rejected—the Department of Planning and residents commenced a planning process to address physical challenges like land use and circulation, as well as the negative impacts of a changing regional economy, disinvestment, and crime in the Penn-North neighborhood.

The neighborhood of Penn-North is located in central West Baltimore City. The neighborhood is bounded by Fulton Avenue to the west and north, Druid Hill Avenue to the east, and North Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, Carey, and Cumberland Streets to the south. The neighborhood is bordered by up-and-coming Reservoir Hill, Parkview, Druid Heights, Sandtown, and Mondawmin neighborhoods. Excepting Druid Heights and Sandtown, these neighborhoods are generally considered to be more stable than declining Penn-North.

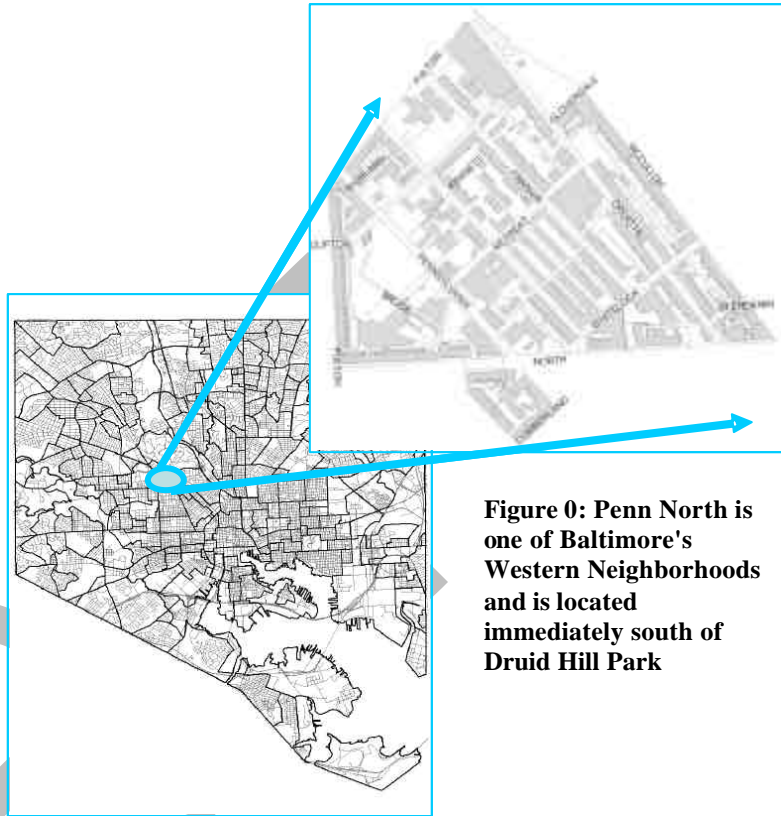


Figure 0: Penn North is one of Baltimore's Western Neighborhoods and is located immediately south of Druid Hill Park

At the time of the Penn-North AMP development, the community did not have any functional community associations. However, during the development of the plan, the planning committee members realized the necessity of working together to achieve their goals, and agreed to form the Penn-North Community Association to represent and advocate their needs as a community.



Map 1: Stabilizing Penn North would help consolidate progress made in neighboring communities, from more stable Reservoir Hill and Parkview to Mondawmin, Sandtown and Druid Heights.

1.3 Plan Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to distinguish the opportunities that exist in Penn-North and to provide a framework to guide future development. The plan analyzes the conditions that present challenges to the neighborhood and identifies opportunities for change that build on the neighborhood's competitive advantages.

The planning committee identified the following issues to address in development of this plan:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ▪ Homeownership | ▪ Strengthening Penn-North community organization |
| ▪ Vacant properties and neighborhood stability | ▪ Employment |
| ▪ Recreation | ▪ Business relationships with community |
| ▪ Drugs and crime | ▪ Business facades/streetscapes |
| ▪ Sanitation | ▪ Traffic safety |
| ▪ Education | ▪ Land Use and Zoning |
| ▪ Strengthening sense of community | ▪ Faith-based resources |

1.4 Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the neighborhood of Penn-North is home to 2340 residents, of which:

- 53.6% are female,
- 69.4% are adults aged 18 and over, and
- 12.2% are 65 and over.

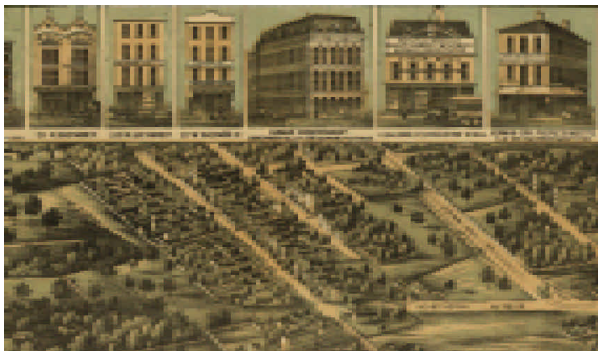
Penn-North is primarily African-American; 97.4% of residents are Black/African-American compared to 64.3% African-American in the City of Baltimore generally.

1.5 Neighborhood History

Penn North is a neighborhood with a past emblematic of the ups and downs of Baltimore's history. Like the City, Penn North began as an immigrant community, developed into a thriving working-class neighborhood, then suffered the impact of declining population, the proliferation of drugs and crime, and concentrated poverty.

Located north of North Avenue in what used to be Baltimore County, the area was established in the 1840's and 1850's as a rural slaughterhouse enclave. Before the area's annexation to Baltimore City in 1888, the first neighborhood inhabitants included mainly German immigrants working as butchers. The neighborhood centered on Reisterstown Road (now called Pennsylvania Avenue within the Penn-North boundaries) which was the primary trade route to Pennsylvania and western Maryland. The first streets to be developed for housing in Penn-North were Druid Hill Avenue, Francis, Woodbrook, and the 1300 block of North Avenue.

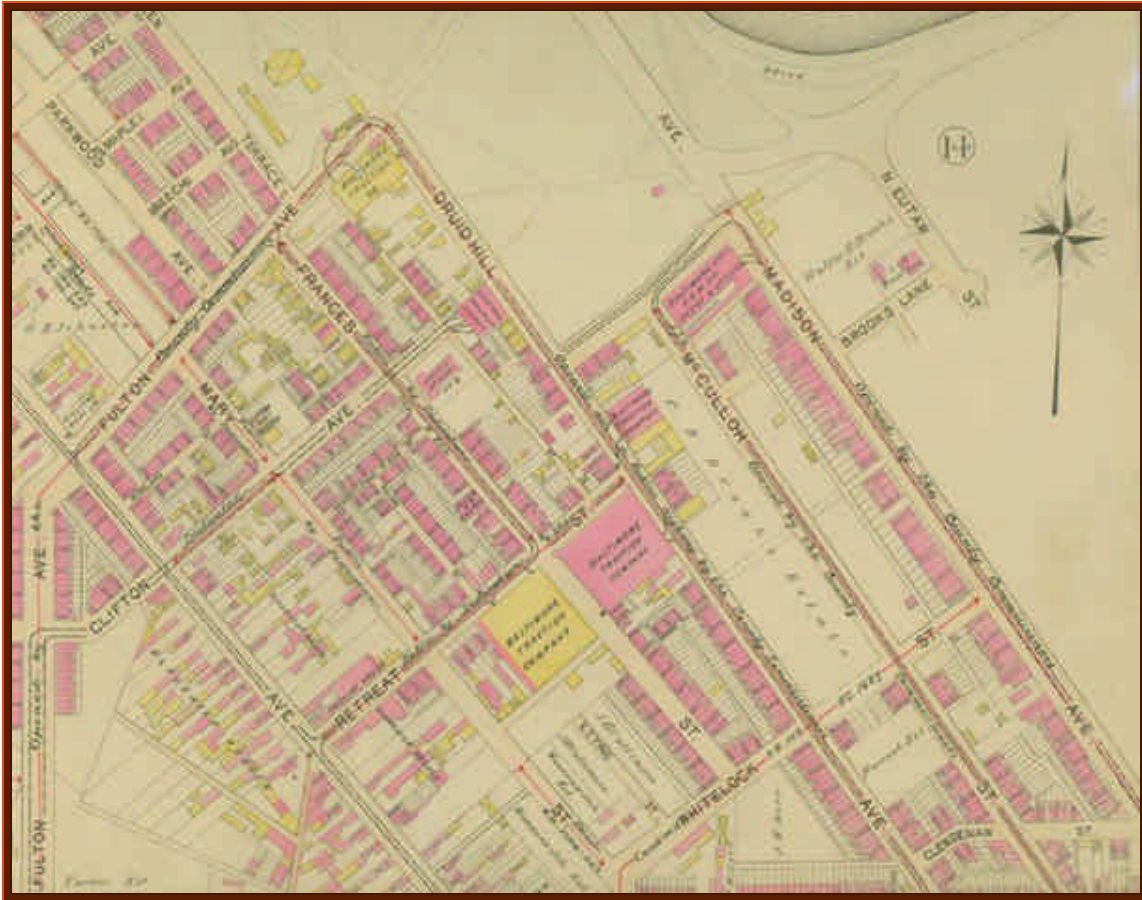
Figure 1: Rendering of Pennsylvania and North Avenues in 1869



The advent of the streetcar industry in Baltimore generated Penn-North's greatest residential and industrial development boost. In 1890, tracks were laid along North Avenue for the electric streetcar and several street car companies sprang up throughout the neighborhood, bringing with them street car storage garages and employees like track laborers, conductors, and

motormen. Other residents of the neighborhood included iron merchants, butchers, stenographers, blacksmiths, bakers, day laborers, teamsters, clockmakers, clerks, ministers, foremen, and teachers.

Initially, the neighborhood was primarily white, including Jewish, German, Irish, Russian, and Lithuanian immigrants. Around the turn of the 20th century, African-American population swelled alongside the immigrant population. In the 1900's the City's black elite settled along McCulloh Street, Druid Hill, and Madison Avenues. Frederick Douglass High School in the nearby Mondawmin neighborhood, the West Baltimore Elementary and Coppin Teachers College in Sandtown served African-American students.



Map 2: 1986 Map of Penn North

During the Great Depression the neighborhood lost many jobs, housing conditions declined, and slum landlords acquired cheap property throughout the neighborhood. However, Penn-North and surrounding neighborhoods continued to be the center of life for Jewish immigrants and African-Americans. Pennsylvania Avenue, just south of Penn-North, enjoyed a national reputation for African-American entertainment with well-known acts like Red Foxx, Duke Ellington, Billy Holiday, and Ella Fitzgerald. Indeed, West Baltimore's African-American citizens led the fight for civil rights in the 1950's and 1960's, resulting in local achievements like the construction of new schools in Penn-North and the desegregation of Gwynns Oak amusement park.

Since the 1960's, however, the Penn-North neighborhood has experienced increasing housing vacancies and blight due in part to the loss of population happening throughout the City at large. Redevelopment and revitalization efforts occurred in fits and starts and have produced two stellar successes.



Figure 2: Justice Place

In 1990 and 1996 two redevelopment projects, Enterprise B.U.I.L.D. and Justice Place, produced 70 and 11 townhomes, respectively, for moderate income homeowners. These units have no vacancies, and only two of these eighty homes are occupied by renters. An optimistic indication of Penn-North's future is that turnover in these projects is minimal with the majority of these

structures occupied by the original owners, indicating dedication and a degree of stability in the community.



Figure 3: Enterprise B.U.I.L.D. Nehemiah's Homes

2 PENN NORTH'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

Competitive advantages are characteristics that make a neighborhood more attractive, more marketable, or more viable than similar places. Neighborhoods must compete with others to attract residents, businesses, institutions, and other investment. By analyzing the existing conditions in Penn-North, one is able to identify opportunities to capitalize on the neighborhood's competitive advantages and to minimize its challenges.

2.1 Neighborhood Assets

On first impression, much of Penn-North seems rather bleak. Because of chronic disinvestment over the years, Penn-North is ostensibly at a disadvantage compared to many other Baltimore neighborhoods.

However, many of the neighborhood's competitive advantages arise from some of its greatest challenges. Penn-North has many elements, some with unrealized potential, that, when threaded together, can lead to a vibrant, thriving neighborhood. The neighborhood has several assets that can be built upon or enhanced to help revitalize the community. These competitive advantages can be grouped into four categories:

- Location and Access
- Neighborhood Recreation, Parks and Services
- Historic Resources and Neighborhood Character
- Development Potential

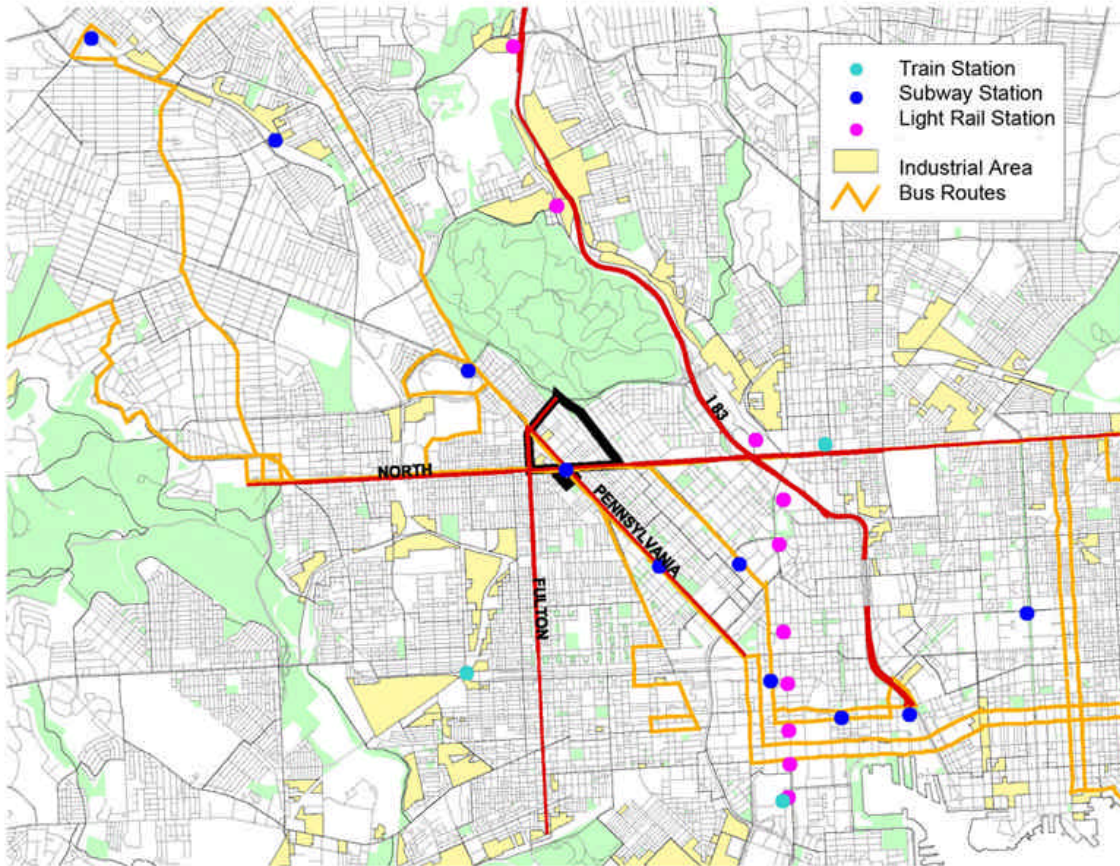
2.2 Location and Access

Penn-North has an advantage over many other Baltimore neighborhoods because of its location and accessibility. Penn-North is located in central West Baltimore, approximately 0.5 miles away from the I-83 interchange, the heavily traveled expressway to downtown Baltimore, and is roughly two miles from Baltimore's Central Business District.



Figure 4: The Penn North Metro Subway Station and the Tickner Building at the intersection of North Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue

The proximity of the neighborhood to the expressway and to the city center makes it an attractive location for downtown workers, for businesses with clientele in the central business district, for residents seeking entertainment and closeness to the Inner Harbor. The neighborhood is along the major, truck-accessible corridors of Pennsylvania, North, and Fulton Avenues, approximately 0.5 miles from the Rosemont Industrial area, making it a convenient location for potential off-site office or operations center for industrial businesses located in Rosemont.



Map 3: Map of transportation around Penn North

In addition, Penn North has ready access to public transportation. The Penn North Transit Station on the Metro Subway line is located on the southern edge of the Penn North neighborhood, at the corner of Pennsylvania and North Avenues. The subway is a convenient way to commute downtown for work, to Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore's largest employer, to Mondawmin Mall just north of the Penn North neighborhood, or to Owings Mills Mall in Baltimore County. This is one of the most actively utilized transit stations in the City with more than 5,500 people entering and exiting the station every weekday. This station is a hub of public transportation and is served by the 7, 13, 91, and 102 bus lines.

2.3 Neighborhood Recreation, Parks and Services

The clearest example of an asset with unrealized potential is Penn-North's proximity to historic Druid Hill Park. This 745-acre park on the National Register of Historic Places borders Penn-North just to the north. The park is noted for its garden and recreational features like natural streams, lakes, swimming pools, tennis courts, the Baltimore Conservatory, the Maryland Zoo, and Chinese Pagoda. The Zoo and the Botanic Gardens have plans for major reinvestments and expansion that will only add to the attractiveness of this beautiful park.

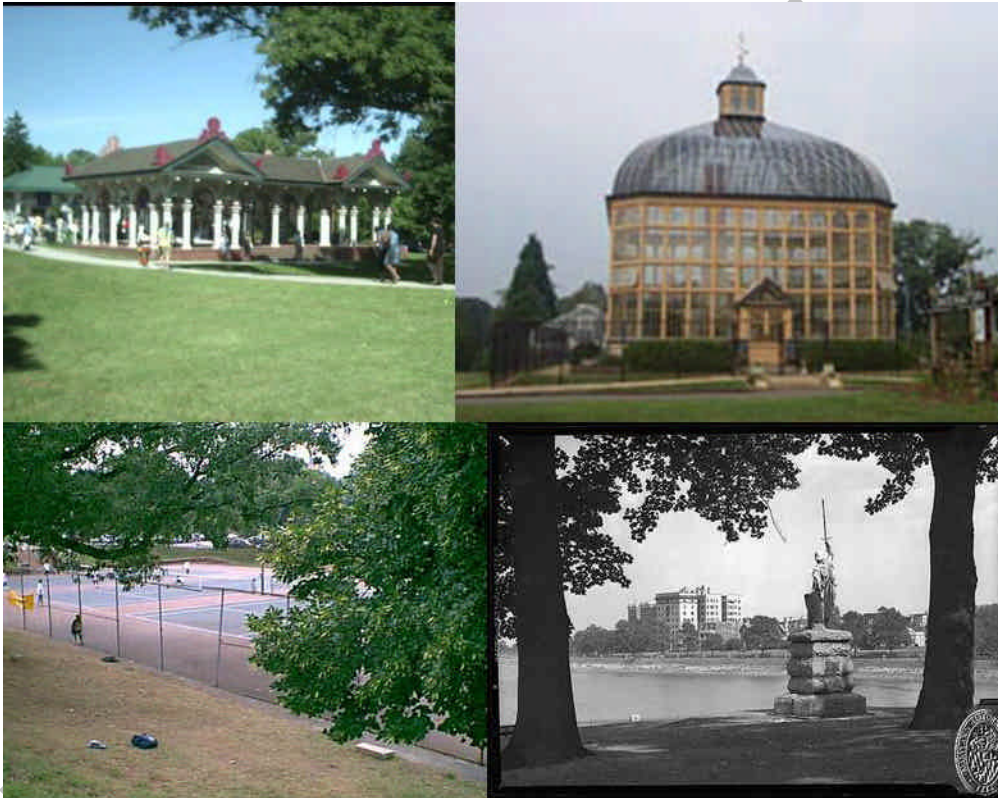


Figure 5: Recreation in and around Penn North: top, Howard Peters Rawlings Conservatory and Botanic Gardens; bottom-left Cloverdale Park; bottom-right, a view of Druid Hill Park Lake

Whereas areas that overlook the park, like Druid Park Lake Drive in neighboring Reservoir Hill and Auchetoroly Terrace in Parkview, have experienced revitalization in recent years partly because of their connection to the park, Penn North has not enjoyed the same trend. One reason for this is that the neighborhood is cut off from the park by a 10-lane high-speed street and by the Department of Public Works-owned Baltimore Traction Building which literally walls the neighborhood from accessing the park. When the park was developed, it led directly into the Penn-North neighborhood. But in the mid-1900's transportation designers constructed Druid Park Lake Drive, a high-speed thoroughway that divides the community from the park by 10 lanes of speeding cars making the pedestrian crossing to the park difficult and unpleasant.



Figure 6: Young basketball players frequently use Cloverdale Park for recreation.

Penn-North is also bordered by Cloverdale Park which contains basketball courts and green space. While residents sometimes complain about the courts as a source of loitering and other crimes, the park is a heavily-used recreational resource.

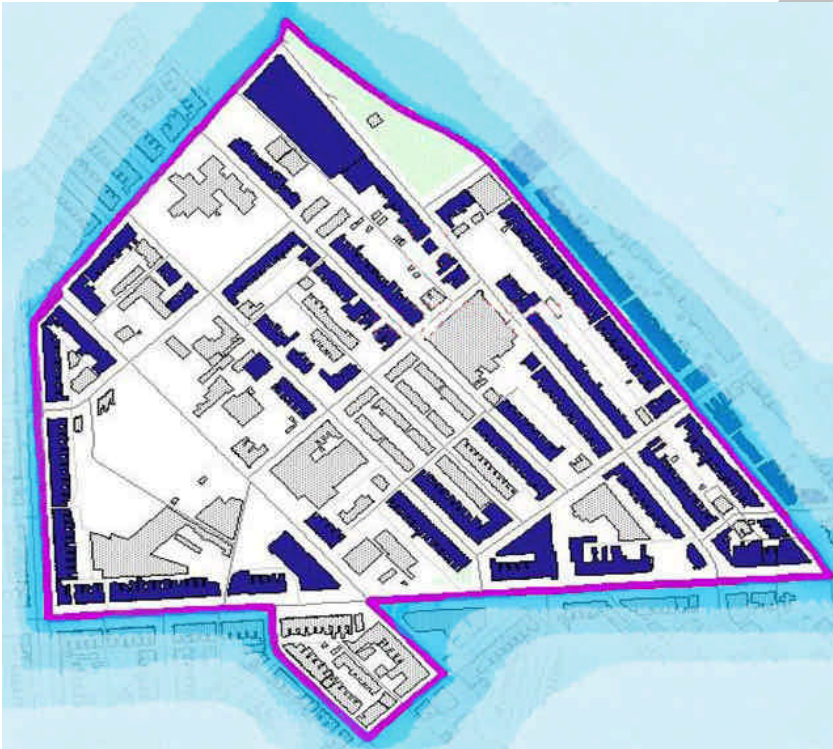
Westside Elementary, located on the northwestern edge of the Penn-North neighborhood, has met the State of Maryland's requirements for making Adequate Yearly Progress in all categories of all grades tested. The fact that Westside Elementary has attained this important milestone makes the school an important asset to the community. Also, located on the same premises are a playground for the school and the Parkview Recreation Center. The school's playground needs some rehabilitation. Better fencing and maintenance of the area is necessary as it is often vandalized and unclear. More patrolling by local police and neighborhood involvement should help mitigate crime and loitering.



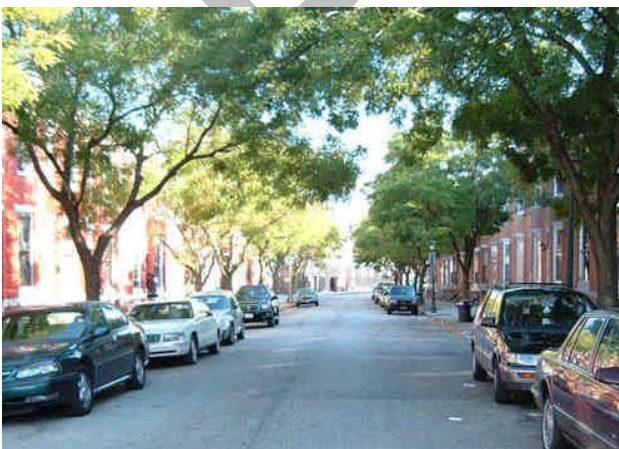
Figure 7: Left, Entrance to the Westside Elementary School; Right, Parkview Recreation Center.

2.4 Historic Resources and Neighborhood Character

While many blocks of Penn-North are blighted, several blocks of intact housing have been deemed by the Division of Historic and Architectural Preservation to be eligible for a historic designation. The architectural features of rowhouses along McCulloh, Francis, Madison, and Woodbrook Streets, Clifton and Fulton Avenues make historic designation and its attendant rehabilitation possible through federal and/or local tax credits, should the community choose to pursue this option. The blocks highlighted in dark blue in Map 4 show those identified by staff of the Baltimore City Historic and Architectural Preservation Division as eligible for possible historic designation.



Map 4: Blocks eligible for historic designation are highlighted in dark blue in the above map.



These blocks have classic Baltimore architecture, narrow streets, and street trees that create an intimate place. While many of these blocks suffer from growing vacancy, they remain the framework upon which a thriving neighborhood can build.

Figure 8: Mature trees, wide sidewalks, and rowhouses along Woodbrook Avenue.

The intersection of Pennsylvania and North Avenues is the key intersection on Baltimore's West side. This bustling intersection is the gateway to the Penn-North neighborhood to the north and Pennsylvania Avenue's famous historic entertainment district to the south. The intersection showcases a mix of important civic, commercial, transportation, and historic sites, including the Pennsylvania Avenue branch of the Enoch Pratt library, the historic Tickner commercial building, the Etting Cemetery, Baltimore's first Jewish cemetery established in 1799, the Arch Social Club, home to the nation's first private men's club in the former Schanze Theater, and the Penn North Plaza Senior Building, a residential mixed-use apartment building.

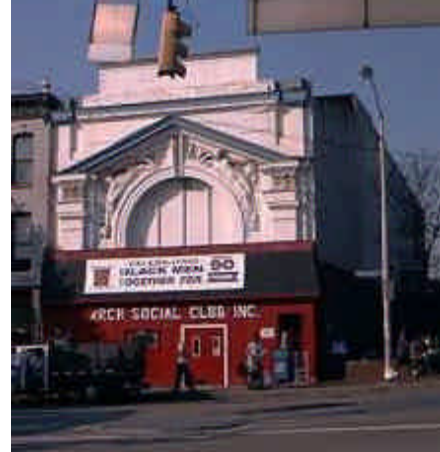


Figure 8: The Arch Social Club and the Schanze Theater on Pennsylvania Avenue.



Figure 10: Historic Tickner building at the corner of Pennsylvania and North Avenue.



Figure 9: Olmstead-designed Fulton Avenue median

In the early 1900's Frederick Olmsted designed a wide, landscaped, lighted median in the center of Fulton Avenue. The median was an essential amenity adding character to a street bordered by middle-class, four-story row homes. However, in the 1950's the median was destroyed to create federal highway Route 1, north-south trucking route. Fulton Avenue and its new median are slated to be reconstructed in 2007 with a 10-foot wide, planted median and bike lane, enhancing the redevelopment and vibrancy already coming back to the street.

2.5 Development Potential

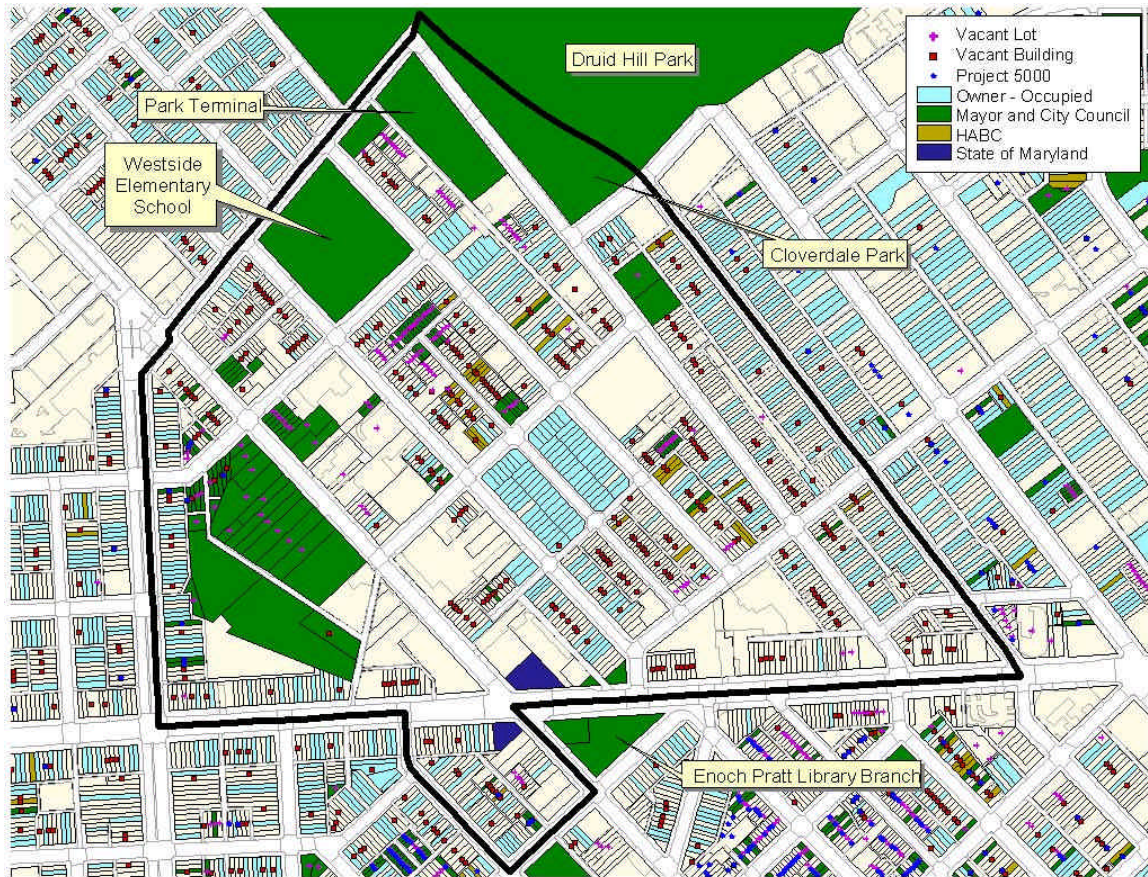
Probably Penn-North's greatest asset is its development potential. Development and redevelopment activities have occurred in sporadic periods in recent decades leaving incomplete, but available, tracts of land and concentrated vacant housing. For example, the 2600 Block of Pennsylvania Avenue offers roughly six acres of cleared land. The 1500 Block of Whitelock Street and the 2600 Block of Salem Streets have concentrations of vacant parcels and blighted, vacant buildings that offer great redevelopment sites. Many of these vacant houses and land are owned by the City of Baltimore. The Lifelike Products building, a former streetcar garage of the Baltimore Transit Company which burned down in January 2005, is an opportunity for residential redevelopment.

Baltimore City's Holding Capacity study conducted in 2005 estimated that Penn-North has potential building capacity of 760 to 1343 dwelling units based on the amount of vacant and underutilized land, current zoning, land use regulations and policies, and economic markets.



Figure 10: The remains of the former Baltimore Transit Company building after a major fire in 2005.

The following map depicts vacant structures, homeowner-occupied structures, vacant lots and city-owned land. Westside Elementary School, Park Terminal (former traction company), and Druid Hill Park are city-owned assets.

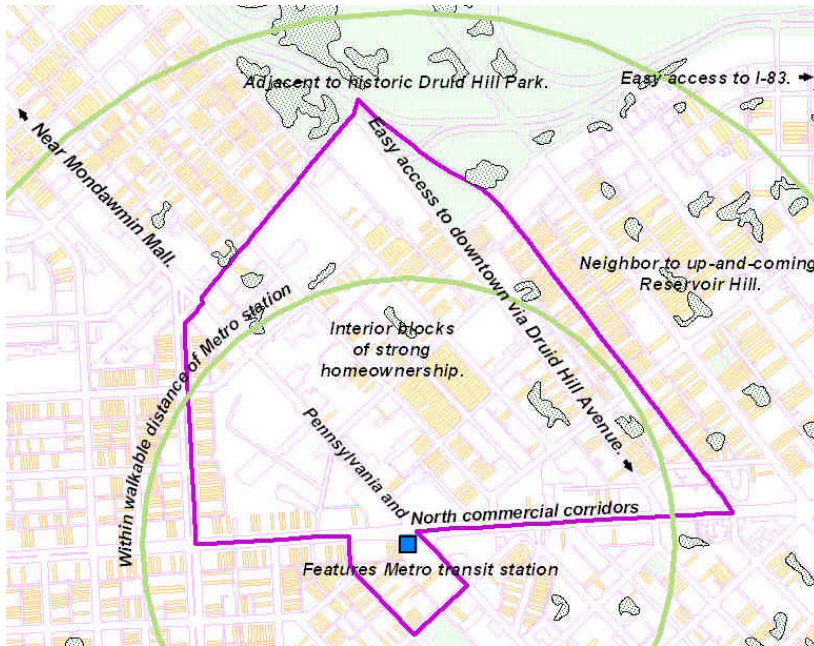


Map 5: Map of ownership and vacancy in Penn North.

Furthermore, a retail capacity analysis showed that within a one-mile radius around the Penn-North Metro station, there were unmet retail demands of more than 370,000 square feet.

Analysis of Unmet Retail Demand			
Retail Store Type	Median Sales Sq Ft	Trade potential 0-1 Mile	Sq footage supported
Apparel and Accessory Stores	\$187.55	\$19,490,149	103,921
Eating and Drinking Places	\$372.93	\$53,548,329	143,587
Food Stores	\$426.62	\$50,011,716	117,227
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores	\$151.63	\$5,986,524	39,481
Home Appliance, Radio, and T.V. Stores	\$237.73	\$4,134,093	17,390
General Merchandise	\$163.30	\$11,227,560	68,755
Total			373,134

Coupled with the undeveloped land only one block from this station, the potential exists for transit-supportive, higher density, mixed-use redevelopment within easy walking distance of the transit station. Increasing development around existing transit stations is a citywide priority.



Map 6: Penn North location assets and transit-oriented development (TOD)

Transit-oriented or transit-supportive development tends to be compact, has multiple uses, encourages walking, and provides a sense of place and civic interaction. Development around transit should be of higher intensity and density than in surrounding areas. Public policy experts recommend that residential areas should have a minimum density of 12 dwelling units per acre or 30 residents per acre in order to support rail transit. With 33 people and 18 dwelling units per acre, Penn-North has slightly more than the minimum recommended density to support rail transit. Future residential developments should meet or exceed these densities to capitalize on the proximity to the Metro station, to civic resources like the Pennsylvania Avenue Library, and other community assets.

Although the value of the present median home sales in Penn North are among the lowest in the area (see following map, Figure 19), Penn North has proven to have a strong market for new products as demonstrated by two successful 1990s redevelopment projects:

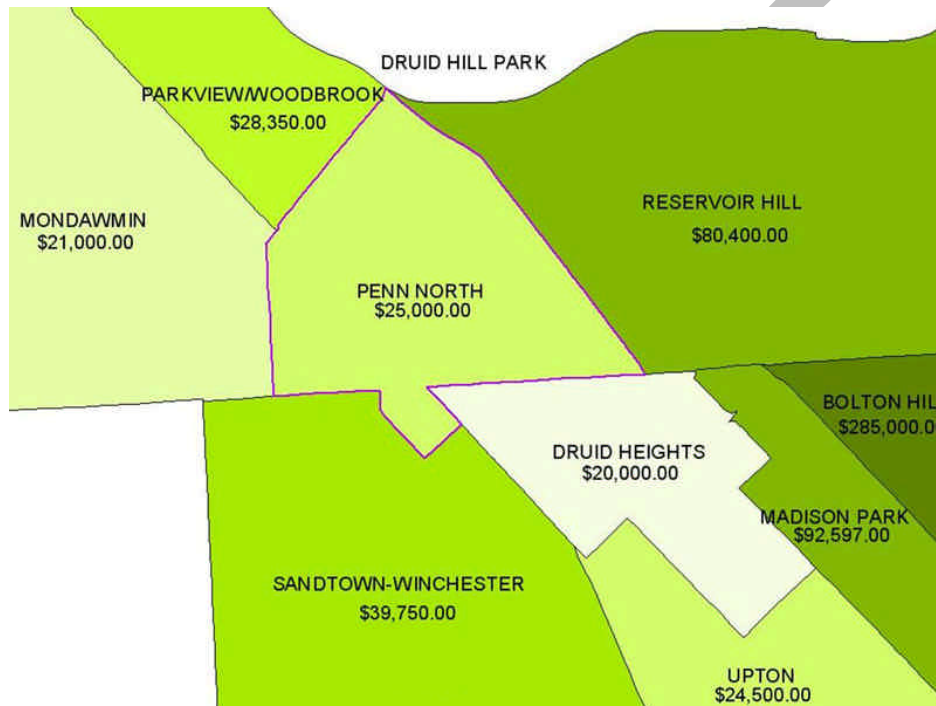
Justice Place and Enterprise B.U.I.L.D. These developments have 80 homeowner-occupied units that never go vacant and have limited turn-around. These blocks, located



Figure 10: 6 acres of vacant land on the 2600 block of Pennsylvania Avenue.

in the interior of the neighborhood, also function as a strong anchor to an otherwise unstable area.

Moreover, to the east of Penn-North, are three very strong neighborhoods - Reservoir Hill, Bolton Hill and Madison Park. Bolton Hill was among the first central Baltimore neighborhoods to experience a rebirth in recent years. Madison Park and Reservoir Hill are currently enjoying a booming real estate market, in part because of the City's Department of Housing and Community Development's efforts through programs like Project 5000, which acquires abandoned rowhouses through municipal liens then sells them to investors and owner-occupants, and Healthy Neighborhoods, which provides low-interest loans for housing rehabilitation.

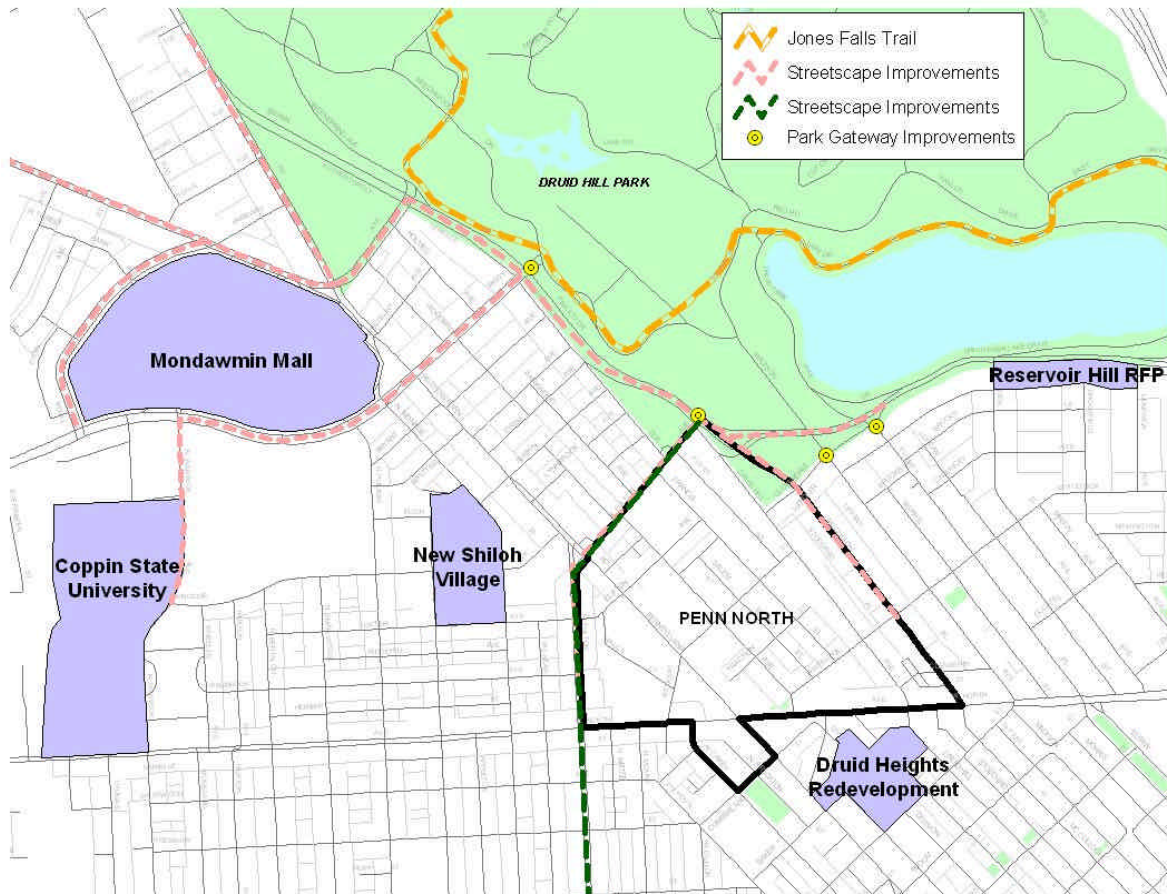


Map 7: Median Sales 2004.

The Map in Figure 20 shows the significantly higher median home sale values for neighborhoods surrounding Penn-North. These neighborhoods serve as anchors to central West Baltimore, and with continued growth and interest in historic neighborhoods throughout Baltimore, they can potentially spark redevelopment interest in surrounding neighborhoods.

In addition to strong residential neighborhoods to the east, Penn North will also benefit from the public and private investment planned in the surrounding neighborhoods; first and foremost the redevelopment of the Mondawmin Mall and Coppin State University's expansion.

Development Activities in and around Penn North	
<p><u>Development Planning</u></p> <p>Mondawmin Mall Master Plan: General Growth Properties has developed a new master plan for the mall that will result in a \$70 million renovation and expansion of the existing structure which will include the addition of a bigger national grocery store, a national big box retail store and a medium box sports apparel store, as well as a general remerchandising of retail offers inside the mall.</p> <p>Mondawmin/Maryland Zoo Transit Station: The Maryland Transit Administration and the City of Baltimore Department of Transportation are working together to develop a number of station and street enhancements to improve pedestrian safety and improve accessibility to the station.</p> <p>Pennsylvania Avenue Redevelopment: The Pennsylvania Avenue Revitalization Corporation (PARC) plans to revitalize the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor, primarily to the south of North Avenue. Development activities will include creation of residential, retail, and entertainment opportunities.</p>	<p><u>Pedestrian and Streetscape Improvements</u></p> <p>Fulton Avenue Median Restoration: The Baltimore City Department of Planning and Department of Transportation are developing plans to restore the Olmstead-designed median from Edmondson Avenue to Druid Park Lake Drive to provide a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood connection to the Park.</p> <p>Druid Lake Street Improvements and Jogging Path: Modifications have been made to provide room for the completion of the walking/jogging path around Druid Lake and upgrading of the remaining section of the walking/jogging path.</p> <p>Pedestrian Entrance Improvements: Major pedestrian entrances in Druid Hill Park are to be renovated to improve neighborhood access to the park and the Jones Falls Greenway. Improvements will include new walks, new steps, ADA ramps, park lighting, and park entrance signs.</p>
<p><u>Development Activities</u></p> <p>New Shiloh Village: New Shiloh Village, a faith-based partnership between New Shiloh Baptist Church and Bon Secours Hospital, will include new senior housing, expanded parking, divinity school, and day care.</p> <p>Coppin Campus Expansion: Coppin University is implementing its expansion plan which grows campus activities northward to Gwynns Falls Pkwy, where a new 5000 seat athletic arena is planned, and southward below North Avenue, where the Health and Human Services Building will be built.</p> <p>Druid Heights Redevelopment: Phase II of the Druid Heights redevelopment area includes new single-family affordable and market-rate housing currently being constructed.</p> <p>Reservoir Hill Mixed Use Redevelopment: Baltimore Housing is in the process of choosing a developer for two large City-owned parcels on Druid Park Lake Drive. The structure will take advantage of the views and access to Druid Hill Park.</p>	<p><u>Master Plans in Development</u></p> <p>Greater Rosemont and Coppin Heights Area Master Plan - GRACE: The City of Baltimore Department of Planning and Coppin University are sponsoring a master plan for West Baltimore neighborhoods including Rosemont, Coppin Heights, Easterwood, Mondawmin, and Midtown Edmondson. The plan envisions redevelopment focused on North Avenue, near the Lutheran Hospital, and around the West Baltimore MARC station.</p>



Map 8: Some of the main redevelopment projects around Penn North.

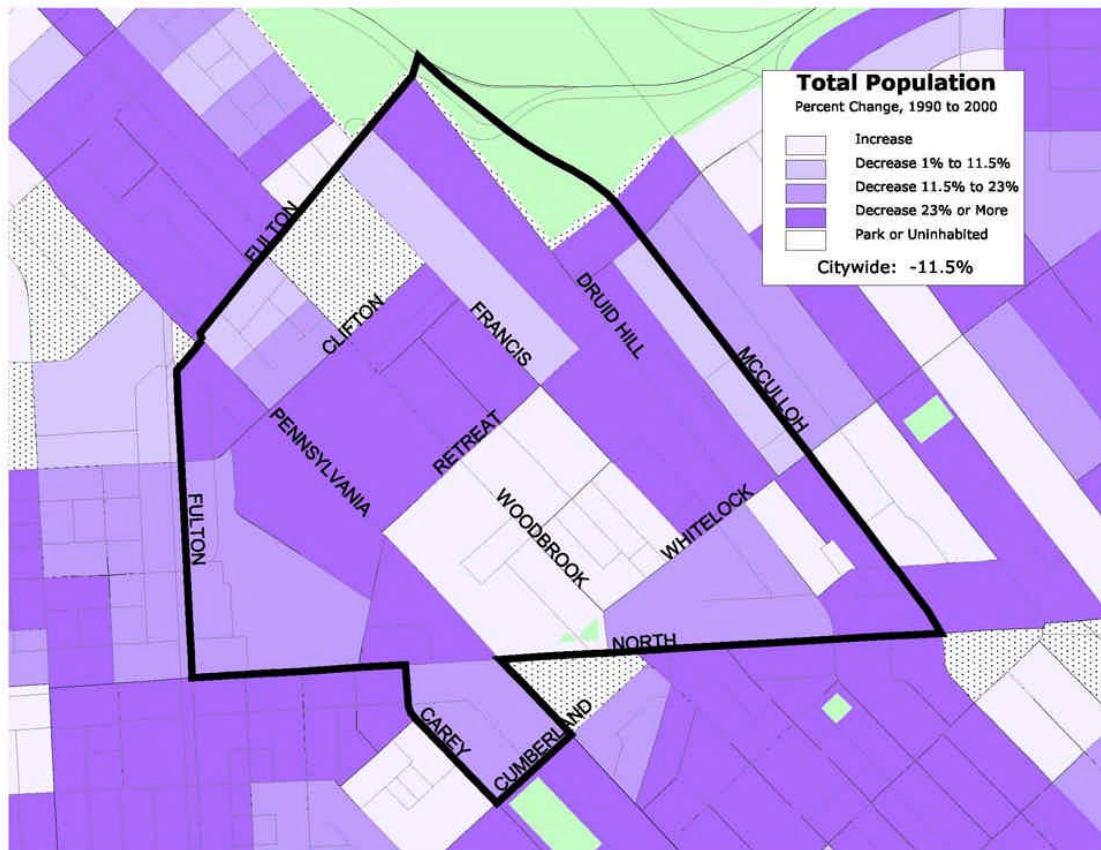
3 NEIGHBORHOOD CHALLENGES

Alongside significant assets, Penn-North has a wide range of challenges to overcome. The following chapter briefly describes the challenges that residents and the City of Baltimore will face in their pursuit of a thriving, revitalized neighborhood.

3.1 Disinvestment and Poverty

Several statistics from the 2000 Census are indicative of Penn-North's current instability, especially when compared to citywide and statewide numbers.

Map 9 below shows the percent of change in population between the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census counts. Since 1990 the population in the Penn-North neighborhood has declined 18%; Baltimore City's has declined 11.5%. Of 1,220 housing units in Penn-North, 30.3% were vacant; the City had a 14.1% rate of vacancy.

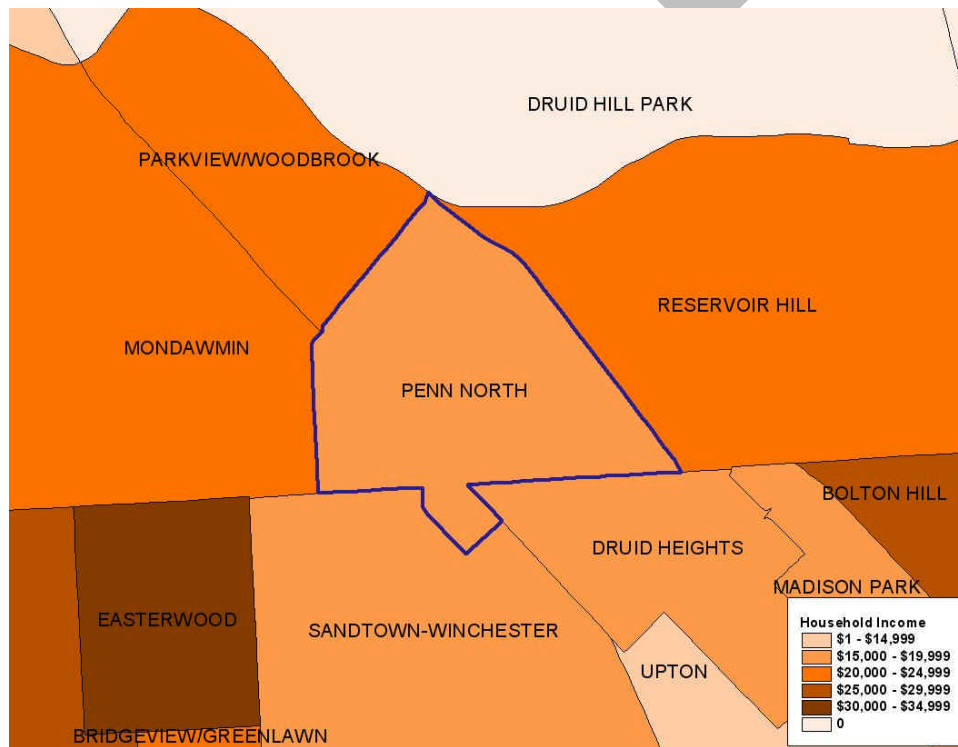


Map 9: Population Change 1990-2000

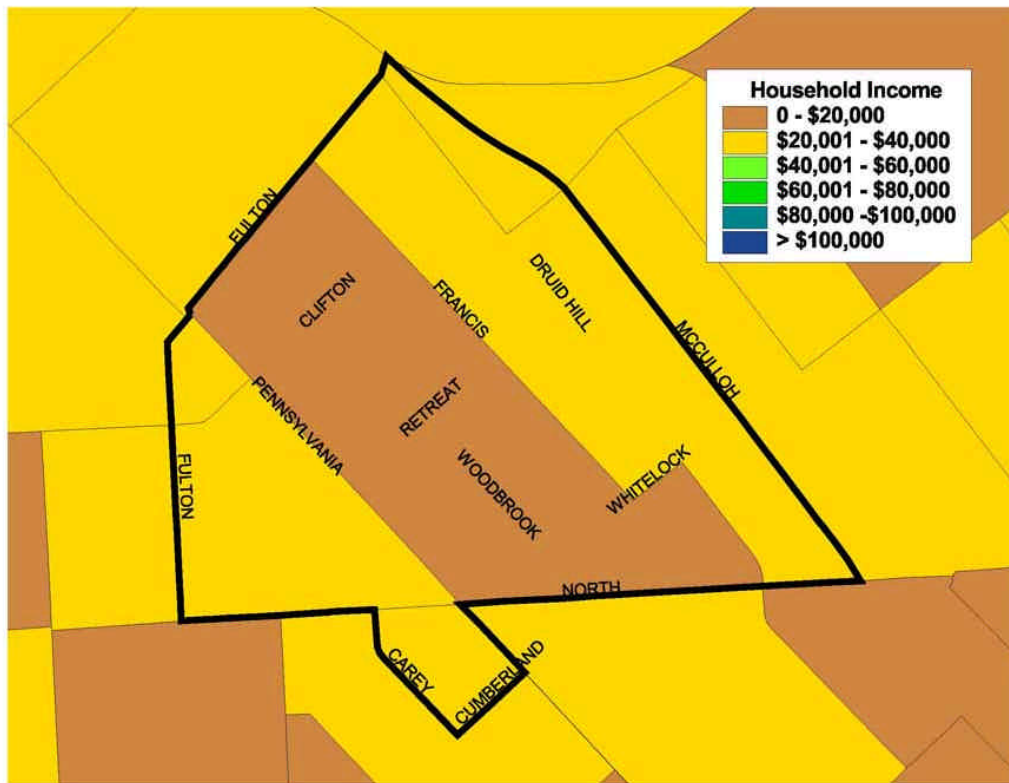
The median household income for Penn-North, Baltimore City, and the State of Maryland respectively are \$17,000, \$30,080, and \$52,868.

The following table describes the poverty level by household type in Penn-North, the City of Baltimore, and the State of Maryland for families; families with female householder, no husband present; and individuals.

	Poverty Level by Household Type		
	Families	Female Householder	Individual
Penn North	41.1%	50.9%	47.3%
City of Baltimore	18.8%	31.5%	22.9%
State of Maryland	6.1%	18.4%	8.5%

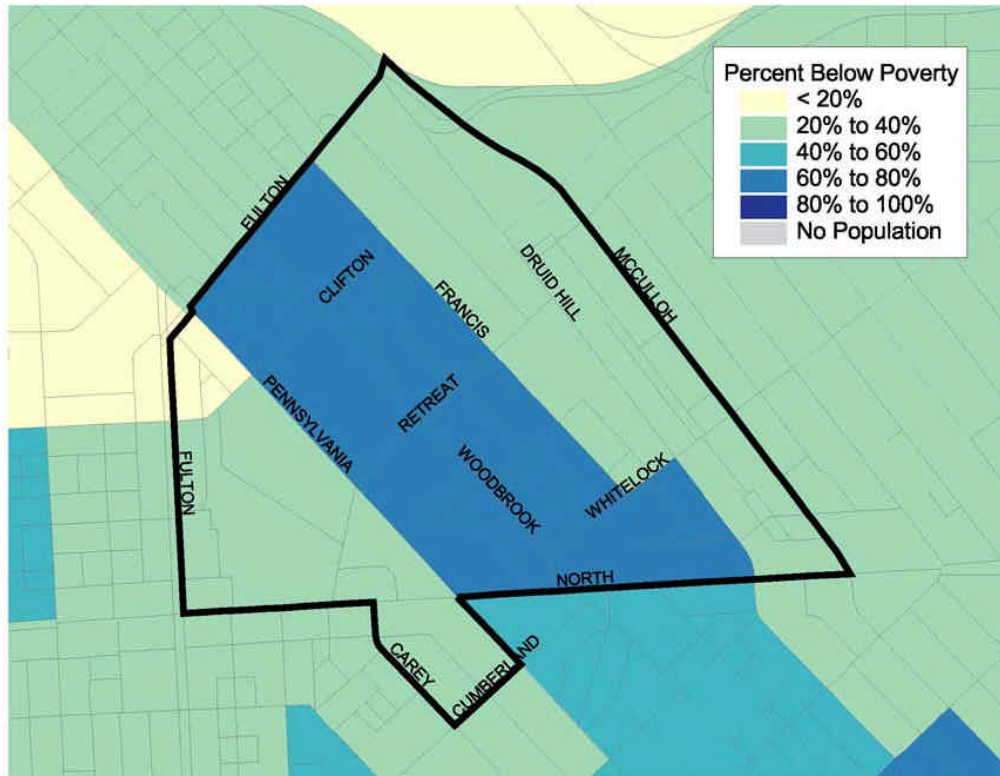


Map 10: Household Income with respect to other neighborhoods



Map 11: Household Income in Penn North

Penn-North has a poverty rate six times that of the State. In Penn-North 23.0% of the civilian labor force is unemployed, compared to 10.7% citywide and 4.7% statewide. Renters occupy 65.3% of household units, compared to 49.7% citywide. Fifty-six percent of renters pay more than 30% of their household income for rent.



Map 12: Percentage below Poverty rate

Similarly, Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance's *Vital Signs* publication reported other more troublesome statistics of economic well-being and poverty for Penn-North than for the City generally. The aggregate 2000 statistics for the Penn North and Reservoir Hill neighborhoods show that the two communities together had 61.6% of married couples with children and 88.5% of other kinds of families living below the Maryland Self-Sufficiency wage standard. The City's rates for the same family groupings were 41.30% and 81.70% respectively.

3.2 Crime

Like other west Baltimore neighborhoods, Penn-North has high rates of poverty, drug abuse, and crime that particularly affects the quality of life of residents and the neighborhood's ability to attract commercial and residential investment. The latest BNIA's *Vital Signs*, released in 2006, reports that 2004 crime rates in the Penn-North/Reservoir Hill conglomerate were often greater than those for the City generally:

- Overall crime rate: Penn-North's rate of reported criminal offenses was 74.90 per 1000 people, while the City of Baltimore's rate was 63.59.
- Violent crimes: Penn-North's rate of violent crimes was 21.23 per 1000; the City's was 18.82.
- Juvenile drug arrests: Penn-North's rate was 48.74 per 1000 people; the City's was 50.86.

Although overall these statistics show an improvement both at the City and neighborhood level, from the same *Vital Signs* statistics for 2003, clearly, the City must address the drug problem, crime and poverty in Penn-North and all other neighborhoods in order to continue the unprecedented growth that Baltimore has experienced in recent years.

In the Penn North neighborhood, as in many other areas of the City, drug activity is most frequent where the vacancy rate is the highest. Acting upon the many areas with extremely high rates of vacancy will surely help secure the neighborhood. Criminal and drug activity is most rampant in the following blocks which also have some of the highest vacancy rates:

- 1600 block of Clifton Avenue
- 2700 block of Pennsylvania
- 1500 block of Richland
- 2500 block of Salem
- 2500 block of Woodbrook
- 2300 and 2400 blocks of Druid Hill Avenue
- Along North Avenue

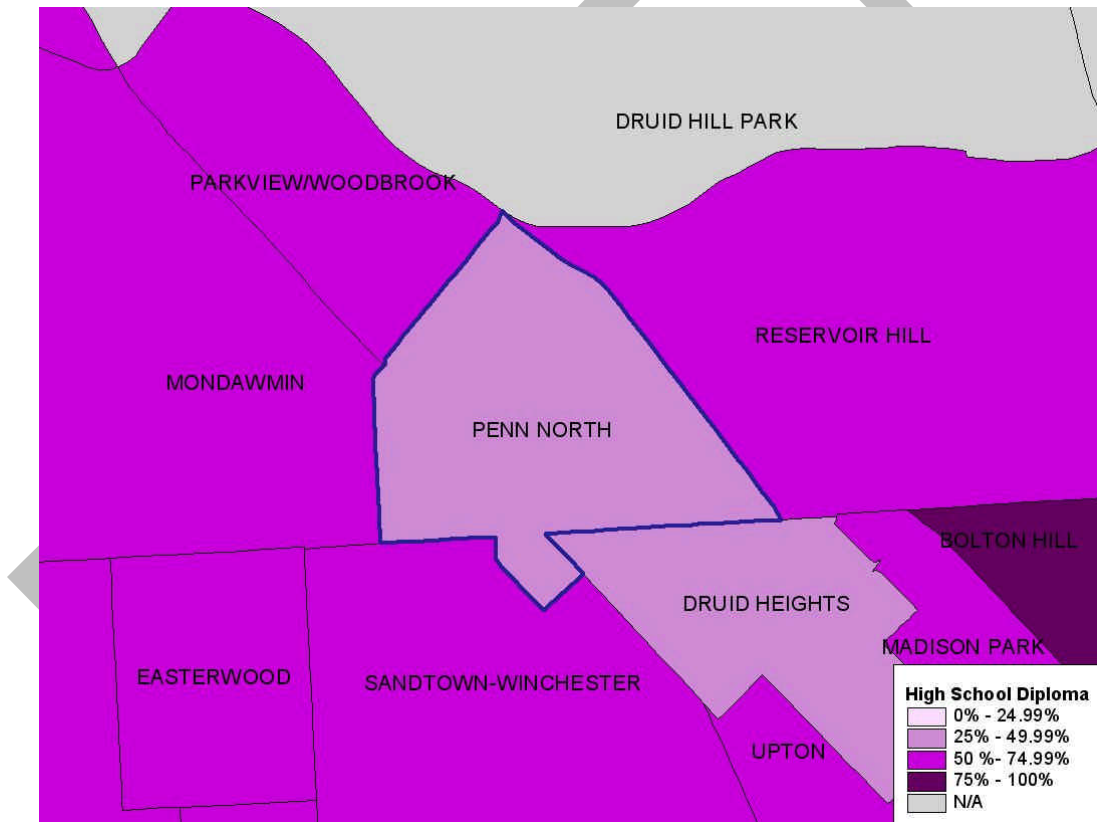
On the contrary, the 2400 blocks of Woodbrook, Etting and Francis, along the Nehemiah B.U.I.L.D. homes, narcotics calls in 2003 were remarkably lower than everywhere else in the neighborhood.

Providing positive alternatives to the youth in Penn North will also help decrease the crime rate. Improvements in schooling, employment and recreation are sorely needed. Acting upon the 23% unemployment rate of the civilian labor force should be a priority.

Investment that creates jobs for residents in the community should be encouraged. Existing business, future commercial projects and future construction jobs should consider giving priority to local residents for employment.

Along with job opportunities, strategies to increase the school attainment and to lower drop-out rates for the youth of Penn North should be found. As Map 13 shows, a dramatically low percentage of Penn North's population holds a high school diploma – its rate is the lowest among the neighboring communities.

Also, safe recreational facilities should be provided both by the City and by the private sector. The City, through its Capital Improvement Program, should improve residents' access to Druid Hill Park and improve the Westside Elementary School playground. Private sector projects that include entertainment venues like theaters, movie rentals, gyms, sit-down restaurants, safe bars, bowling alleys and should be encouraged.



Map 13: School attainment in Penn North is very low, as is employment, among youth.

3.3 Unsupportive Land Uses

While Penn-North can currently be described as a mixed-use, high-density neighborhood, its mix of uses does not service the needs of the community. The neighborhood has a strange mix of automotive and light- and heavy-industrial uses, like:

- Warehouses
- Commercial laundry facility
- Slaughterhouse
- Towing yard
- Automotive repair
- Bus and truck storage lots



Figure 11: Pennsylvania Avenue's unsupportive land uses.

While existing zoning supports many of these establishments, there are several that operate illegally, against the tenets of the zoning code. Some flagrantly ignore zoning and traffic ordinances that prohibit parking, storage, or dumpsters on sidewalks, or forbid blocking alleys and streets with vehicles or refuse.



Figure 12: Many of the uses and establishments in Penn North are not residentially-friendly. Many of the operating car and truck repair shops, for instance, illegally park trucks and cars on side walks.

Residents have few retail, employment, restaurant, or entertainment services nearby that address their day-to-day needs. Restaurant offerings are primarily fast-food carry-outs that do not offer a variety of high-quality foods. In fact, on the corner of Fulton and Pennsylvania, there are three fried chicken carry-outs. Retail establishments are marginal. Coupled with the fact that there has been significant disinvestment by commercial establishments and residents over the past several decades, Penn-North residents often have to go outside of their neighborhood to fulfill basic daily needs like groceries.



Figure 13: Left, vacant commercial buildings on North Avenue; Right, vacant commercial buildings on Pennsylvania Avenue.

3.4 Pedestrian Safety and Traffic Control

Penn-North is surrounded by several wide, multi-lane streets that present daunting challenges to pedestrians. The intersection of major thoroughfares, Pennsylvania and North Avenues, is quite wide and unfriendly to pedestrians. The intersection is characterized by poorly marked crosswalks, misaligned pedestrian signals, and overly large turning radii that favor vehicular movement over safe pedestrian crossing.

Within the neighborhood, Druid Hill Avenue offers commuters a convenient alternative route to downtown. Not surprisingly, the street becomes very busy during morning rush-hour. Residents of Penn-North report that drivers often speed down the long, narrow street, creating a hazard for pedestrians and other drivers.



Figure 14: The intersection of Pennsylvania and North Avenue presents a challenge to pedestrians

To the north, pedestrians are dissuaded from accessing Druid Hill Park by the 10-lane Druid Park Lake Drive. Pedestrians find navigating the highway difficult because they are hindered by the lack of pedestrian signals and a lack of visual connection to the park due to the wide road and topography. Furthermore, the lack of a gateway or signage pointing to the park does not invite residents and visitors to it, nor provide a visual integration of the park and neighborhood.



Figure 16: Currently the northern edge of the neighborhood is separated from Druid Hill Park by 10-lane Druid Park Lake Drive



Figure 15: A potential pedestrian improvement option is shown above

3.5 Image and Identity

Like other distressed neighborhoods in the City of Baltimore, residents have cited sanitation to be a major problem. Trash littered vacant lots and streets and rat infestation threaten the health of residents. Residents attribute the sanitation problems to neglect by absentee landlords and to newcomers to the neighborhood who do not know or ignore rules about trash pick-up. Furthermore, several food establishments mishandle waste, which in turn encourages the proliferation of rats.

Because of sanitation issues, high rates of vacancy, crime and poverty, Penn-North is burdened by a negative image. Such a negative image hinders economic and community development by discouraging investors and potential home buyers.



Map 14: The areas surrounded in red have been identified as having the worst sanitation and litter problems. Not surprisingly, these are also the areas with the most vacant buildings and lots.

Compounding this negative image is the lack of gateways, signage, landmarks, or other markers that identify Penn-North apart from surrounding neighborhoods, indicate entrance or exit from the neighborhood, or integrate the neighborhood with surrounding assets. Significant structures like the transit station, library, and Tickner building are not highlighted as landmarks. While much of the City-owned Baltimore Traction building is historically and architecturally significant, it also serves as a solid barrier between the park and the growing Reservoir Hill neighborhood.

4 GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the development of this plan, the Penn North Planning Committee, made up of a group of neighborhood residents, identified the issues to be addressed in the planning process. The following planning objectives are critical to improving the community and its long term success:

To stabilize the neighborhood and advance community development by:

- improving homeownership opportunities,
- eliminating vacant properties and blight,
- improving access to recreation, and
- strengthening the sense of community within the neighborhood.

To stimulate economic development by:

- increasing opportunities for employment,
- encouraging growth of existing businesses, and
- improving access to beneficial commercial services.

To improve the quality of life by:

- decreasing criminal activity and improving the perception of safety,
- improving sanitation within the community, and
- enhancing traffic safety to increase access to community resources.

4.1 Land Use and Zoning

The neighborhood should capitalize on the proximity to the Metro station, availability of undeveloped land, and vacant and blighted housing to build a thriving, mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood.

A zoning study should be conducted to determine the best zoning options for Penn-North to:

- enhance transit-oriented development opportunities, especially on the south-west side of the 2600 block of Pennsylvania Avenue – future TOD in Penn North should conform to the standards and regulations in Appendix A;
- encourage development densities at or above current densities;
- encourage a mix of uses that serve the community with retail, entertainment, and employment offerings;
- phase out incompatible, industrial and automobile-oriented uses along Pennsylvania Avenue, North Avenue, and throughout the neighborhood;

- Create a sense of “place” by orienting buildings toward the streets, and creating compact, pedestrian-friendly design and streetscapes.
- Explore the relocation of automobile-oriented and industrial businesses incompatible with a residential mixed-use neighborhood.
- Maximize available land at 2600 Pennsylvania Avenue, require new developments to provide any off-street parking behind or under buildings or in structured garages.
- Encourage shared-parking arrangements between commercial establishments, churches, or other uses that require multiple parking spaces.

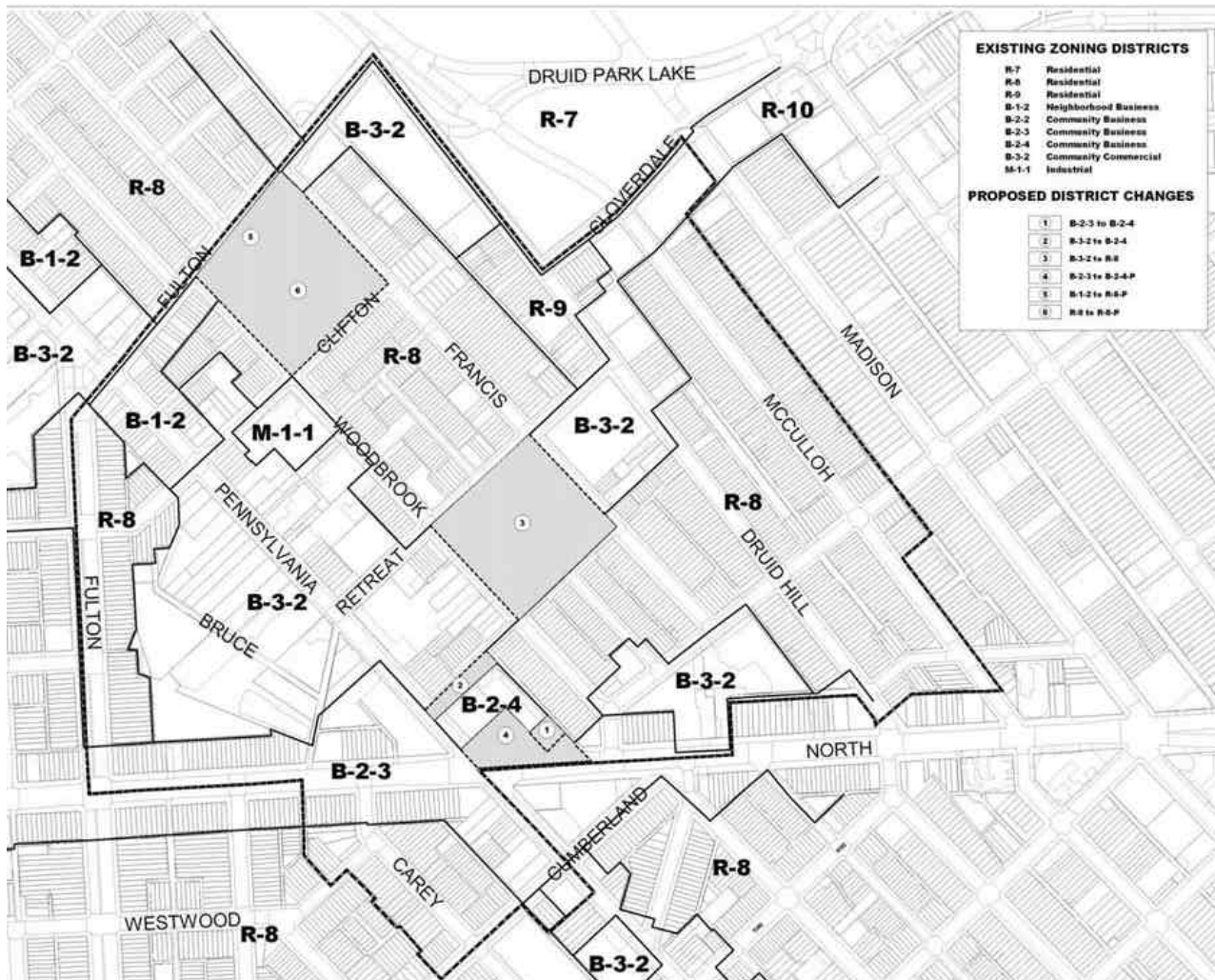


Figure 17: Penn North's current zoning map shows a confusing mix of zoning districts with industrial and commercial uses cutting through residential areas.

4.2 Housing

- Stabilize blocks by prioritizing Penn-North for the Targeted Enforcement for Visible Outcomes (TEVO) program.
- Offer opportunities for safe, clean and affordable housing in all redevelopment and new development projects throughout Penn-North.
- Require developers seeking public financial assistance to provide mixed-income housing units by reserving 10 - 20% of housing units for low- and moderate-income homeownership and rental.
- Encourage private investment to maintain and upgrade the existing housing stock with home rehabilitation assistance programs like Healthy Neighborhoods.
- Consider designating Penn-North as a national historic district to maintain the architectural heritage of the neighborhood while offsetting some of the costs of redevelopment to investors.
- Acquire abandoned properties through Project 5000 or other acquisition program to be made available for purchase and rehabilitation by private investors, particularly on intact streets like Francis, Woodbrook, Fulton, McCulloh, and Clifton.

4.3 Gateways, Streets and Corridors

- Enhance the intersection of Pennsylvania and North Avenues to provide an attractive, pedestrian-friendly gateway to the Penn-North neighborhood.
- Provide attractive, pedestrian-friendly streetscape and traffic controls along North and Pennsylvania Avenues to enhance safety for pedestrians while maintaining appropriate space for movement of trucks and other through traffic.
- Reconfigure Druid Park Lake Drive and Druid Hill Avenue to increase pedestrian safety by slowing traffic and providing pedestrian signaling.
- Reconfigure Druid Park Lake Drive to provide a gateway and transition between Druid Hill Park and the Penn-North neighborhood.

4.4 Sanitation

- Improve access to alleyways by eliminating curbs and other barriers, particularly along alleys used by commercial establishments on North Avenue.
- Improve lighting in areas with recurrent dumping problems.
- Explore possibility of surveillance cameras to catch dumpers in the act.

The residents of the planning committee agreed to several neighborhood-based strategies to combat sanitation problems throughout the neighborhood. The residents agreed to have the Penn-North Neighborhood Association to:

- Educate community residents on 311 process.
- Ask residents to call 311 consistently.
- Write letters from the Association to problem property owners asking them to address sanitation issues.
- Invite problem property owners to community meetings to discuss persistent sanitation problems.
- Organize community pick-up activities on regular basis
- Increase neighborhood-wide use of rat eradication program
- Investigate possibility of deputizing community residents to issue citations

4.5 Crime

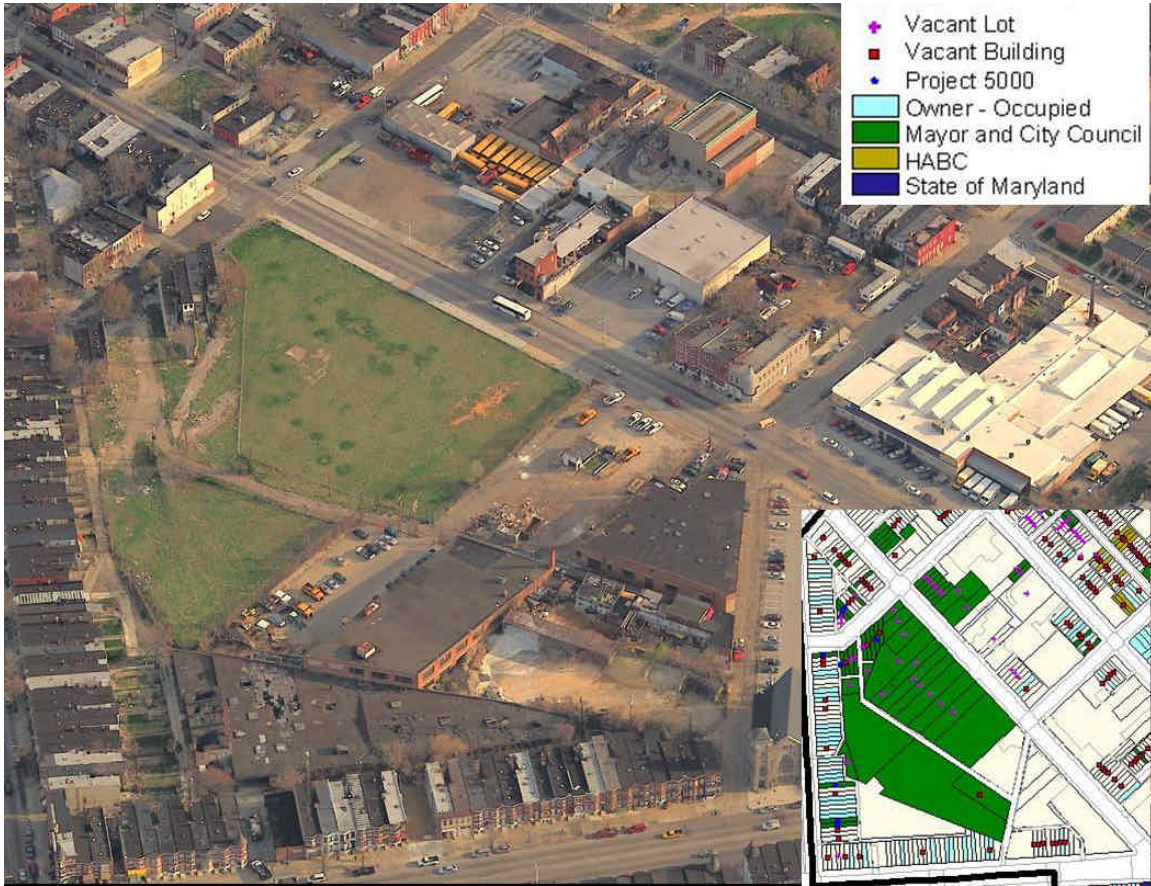
- Use surveillance cameras in areas of high street crime and drug activity.
- Improve lighting throughout the neighborhood.
- Utilize defensible space strategies throughout the neighborhood.
- Demolish blocks along Salem Street to discourage loitering and drug trafficking.

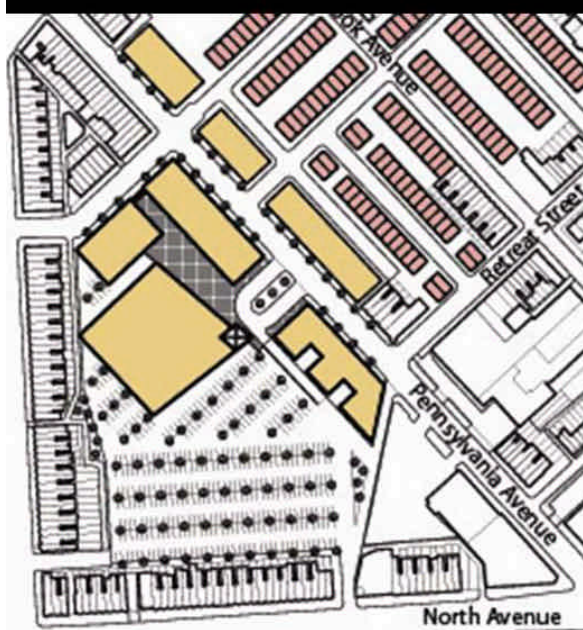
4.6 Proposed Redevelopment Strategy



Redevelopment Area 1

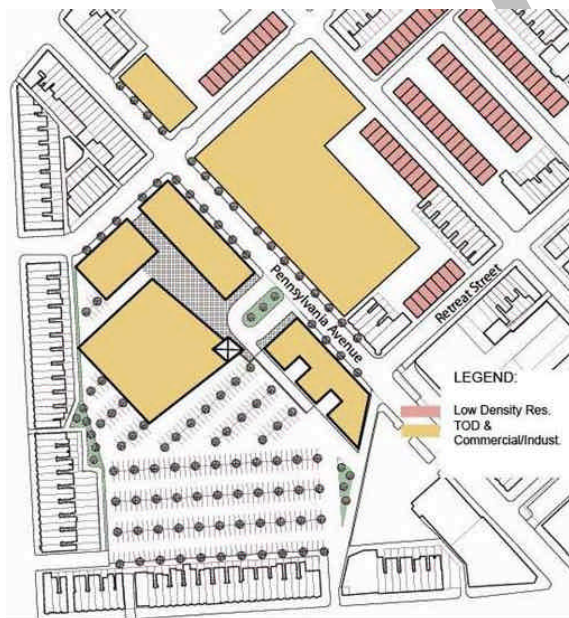
Existing Conditions:





Redevelopment Area 1, Scenario A

- Transit Oriented Redevelopment along Pennsylvania Avenue
- Sit-down restaurants
- Ground-floor retail
- Upper-story residential
- Town-house development on Woodbrook



Redevelopment Area 1, Scenario B

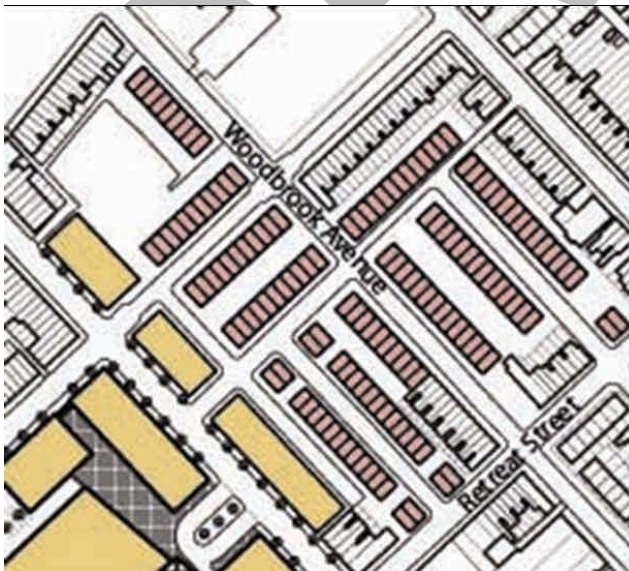
South Side: Transit Oriented

Redevelopment with ground-floor retail, restaurants and upper-story residential.

- **North Side:** Industrial/commercial uses that are minimal nuisance to surrounding properties and create living-wage jobs for residents.

Redevelopment Area 2

Existing Conditions:

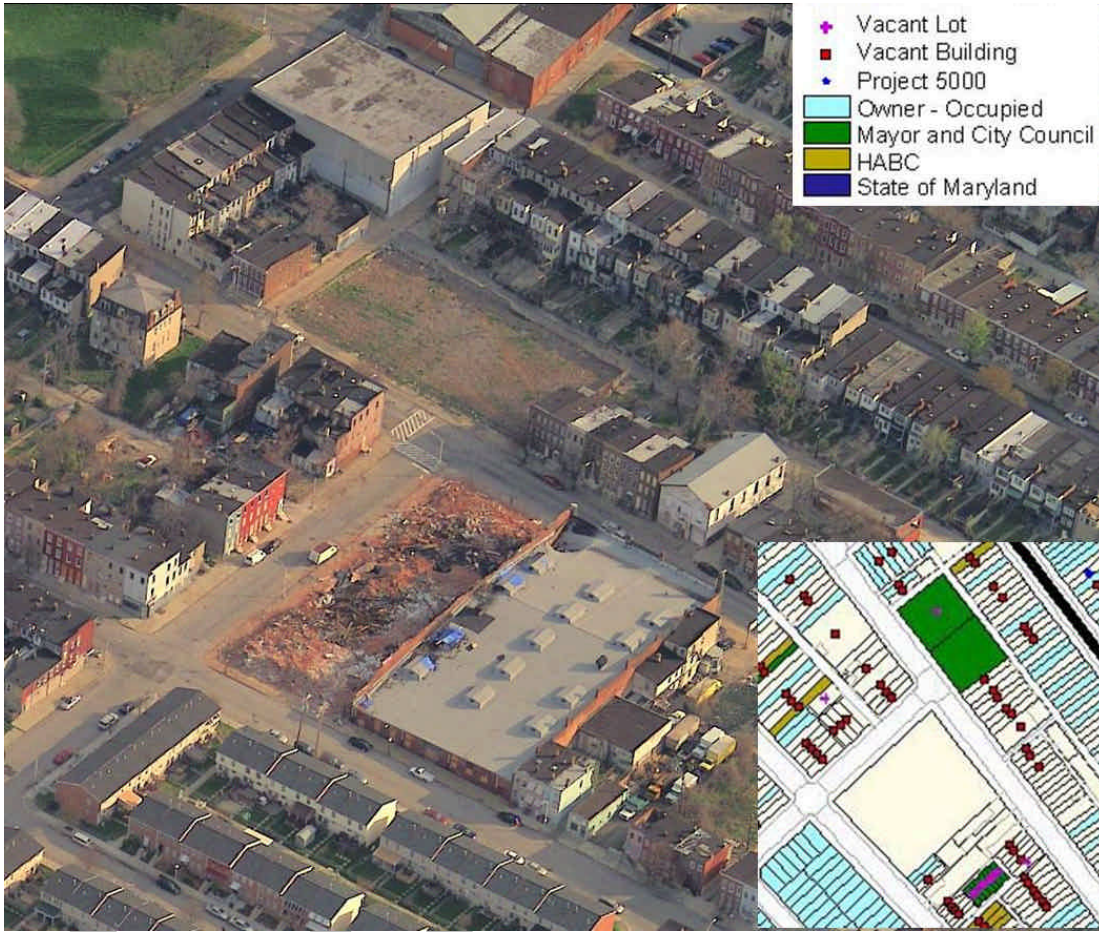


Redevelopment Area 2

- **Salem Street:** Redevelop Salem and Kensett to mirror adjacent Nehemiah Homes and stabilize the residential core of Penn North
- **Woodbrook/Richland/Clifton:** Redevelop abandoned and vacant homes for homeownership

Redevelopment Area 3

Existing Conditions:

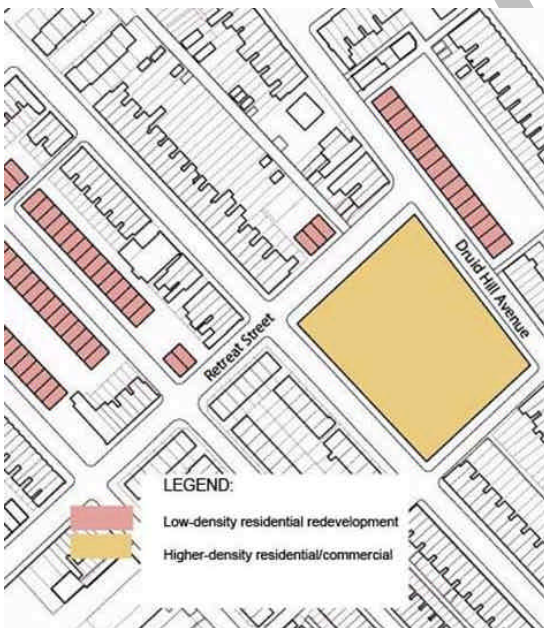




Redevelopment Area, 3 Scenario A

Low-density residential redevelopment:

- Redevelop the former Baltimore Transit Company building site and the adjacent vacant lots with townhomes.



Redevelopment Area 3, Scenario B

Mid-Density Mix-use redevelopment:

- Redevelop the former Baltimore Transit Company building into a mid-density apartment complex with accompanying ground-floor retail to benefit all Penn North residents.

4.7 Appendix A: Transit Oriented Development Design Guidelines for the Penn North Community

A TOD center is a place of relatively higher density that includes a mixture of residential, employment, shopping, and civic uses located within an easy walk of a transit stop.

The promotion of TOD in the City is one of the objectives of “Live, Earn, Play, Learn – a Business Plan for a World Class City”, Baltimore’s new Master Plan (Live Section, Goal 2: Elevate the Design and Quality of City’s Built Environment; Objective 3: Promote Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Mix-Use Development to Reinforce Neighborhood Centers and Main Streets).

TOD in the City of Baltimore should follow the development guidelines offered in the City of Baltimore Development Guidebook.

Moreover, TOD is an identified neighborhood revitalization strategy of the Draft Penn North Area Master Plan. TOD within ¼ mile from the Subway Train Station in Penn North would be supported by the demand and market created by the more than 5,500 people that enter and exit the transit station and buses on a daily basis (2004 MTA ridership data) and by the under-served residents that already live in Penn North.

Development on the site shall exhibit the following design principles:

- Higher density development in relation to the surrounding community
- A mix of land uses, horizontally and vertically
- Compact pedestrian-oriented design and streetscapes
- Building design & orientation towards Pennsylvania Avenue
- Connected street pattern with small blocks and no cul-de-sacs
- A system of quality open space and amenities
- Limited and managed automobile parking

In addition, the development shall adhere to the following guidelines for land use, site and building design, and street patterns and parking:

Land Use

- Provide a mix of uses including residential, commercial, and retail to generate pedestrian traffic throughout the day, including evenings and weekends
- Automobile oriented uses, such as gas stations and drive-thru institutions, should be discouraged.

Site & Building Design

- Locate public spaces and buildings with active uses on the street-level immediately adjacent to Pennsylvania Avenue. Street-level residential development on Pennsylvania avenue should be discouraged
- The street-level along Pennsylvania Avenue shall be occupied by “active uses” such as retail, restaurants, cafes, or service-type businesses with windows and entrances facing the street and residential and business uses located above.
- Provide safe walking and bicycle paths to daily services such as stores, banks, cafes.

Street Patterns & Parking

- Prioritize structured parking instead of paved parking lots
- Provide a grid street system with compact blocks.